

THE STUDY OF MAN

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL THEORY OF PREJUDICE

Does It Underrate the Role of Social History?

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ETHNIC prejudice, intolerance, and discrimination represent a major problem for American democracy. Since American social science has tended to address itself to the solution of practical problems, it is not surprising that a considerable amount of scientific effort has been devoted to the study of prejudice and discrimination, particularly since the publication of Gunnar Myrdal's monumental work, *An American Dilemma*, which was published in 1944. This intensive research effort of the last ten years or so has now been systematically summed up in two books by outstanding scholars in the field: *The Social Psychology of Prejudice*, by Gerhart Saenger, and *The Nature of Prejudice*, by Gordon W. Allport. Although Saenger and

IN THE past two decades, ethnic prejudice has been an area of prime concern for American social scientists, and they have been able to make important contributions not only to its understanding, but to programs looking to its elimination. Two books have recently appeared that summarize the most widely accepted findings and theories developed in this period: *The Social Psychology of Prejudice*, by Gerhart Saenger (Harper, 274 pp., \$4.00) and *The Nature of Prejudice*, by Gordon W. Allport (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley, 537 pp., \$5.50). PAUL KECSKEMETI tries here to crystallize out their basic observations and theories on prejudice and its causes, and contributes to the continuing discussions some highly suggestive questions of his own as to current generalizations and method in the field. Mr. Kecskemeti is a philosopher and social scientist on the staff of the Rand research organization, where he is engaged in studies of totalitarianism. He is the author of *Meaning, Communication, and Value* (1952).

Allport go beyond the summarization of work already done to give their own analysis of the phenomenon of ethnic prejudice, as well as to evaluate current methods of investigation, their two books can be taken as representative of the broad consensus of opinion that exists among modern students of prejudice. With these two books in hand, it is possible to answer the question: What is the modern scientific view of prejudice, and how satisfactory is it?

A salient characteristic of this modern approach is its *psychological* emphasis. Not that our authors ignore prejudice's cultural and sociological dimensions; on the contrary, they deal extensively both with its cultural roots and its sociological manifestations. But in doing so, they focus their attention upon things that can be dealt with as virtually autonomous psychological and behavioral phenomena, divorced from the cultural and sociological context. The analysis of prejudice and discrimination thus comes to be organized around concepts like "stereotypes," "scapegoating," "frustration-aggression," "status anxiety," "the authoritarian personality," etc.—all descriptions of psychological phenomena.

THE general theory of prejudice and discrimination that has been built up with the help of these concepts may be summarized thus:

1. Prejudice and discrimination are in part inherent characteristics of our culture. "Stereotypes" about minority groups enjoy currency in our society and unwittingly color the thinking, attitudes, and behavior of its members.

2. The stereotypes are essentially forms of delusion. Yet persons who show nothing more than the culturally current degree of prejudice cannot be said to suffer from psychopathological

delusions—they are, so to speak, the victims of indoctrination with false stereotypes.

3. On the other hand, individuals who exhibit a very high degree of ethnic prejudice suffer from grave personality disorders. They represent the "authoritarian personality" type, with its marked pathological traits. They cannot come to terms with reality. Driven by destructive and self-destructive impulses which they can neither acknowledge nor control, they take refuge in a rigid, censorious moralism, identify themselves with the rich and powerful, and turn a hateful and aggressive face to the weak and the deviant. This authoritarian syndrome can be traced back to psychic damage suffered in early childhood.

4. People who show little or no ethnic prejudice represent the norm of psychological health and adjustment. This type, labeled the "democratic personality," is flexible and undogmatic in its thinking. It sympathizes with the weak, shows no animosity towards deviant people, and is indifferent to power.

5. Social practices based upon prejudiced stereotypes serve mainly to facilitate the exploitation of the economically weak. Prejudice and discrimination are used by dominant groups to defend their vested interests. Members of lower social strata, however, may also take advantage of prejudice in order to attain real or imaginary gains at the expense of weak out-groups.

6. Prejudice often represents a psychological response to severe frustration. Individuals or groups whose security or status is threatened by dominant economic trends are very often apt to blame "scapegoats" for their predicament. These fears of insecure people are skillfully exploited by power-seeking demagogues.

SUCH, in outline, is both Saenger's and Allport's argument. There are, of course, differences between the two works: both in presentation and in content. Professor Allport's book is meant primarily for the student and scientific worker; it is a fully documented account of the main work done in the field of prejudice and treats both substantive and methodological problems in great detail. Professor Saenger, on the other hand, writes primarily for the general reader and the worker in group relations; his account is brief without being superficial.

The concluding parts of both books are devoted to the strategy of combating prejudice

and discrimination. The practical conclusions our scholars reach are about the same. As a cultural trait, prejudice cannot be done away with overnight—it will not yield to rational discussion, however persuasive. As a psychic defect, "high" prejudice might be corrected by psychotherapy, but this method has obvious practical limitations. On the other hand, something can be done to curb discriminatory practices. Though tainted with prejudice, our culture is also committed to democratic principles of equality and fair play. This also is a cultural fact, and it can find expression in education and in legislative and administrative acts directed against discrimination.

Professor Saenger in particular makes out a strong case for the technique of the administrative and legal *fait accompli*: when managers simply ignore the prejudices of the working force and go ahead and hire Negroes, the chances are that there will be no trouble. In matters of employment at least, prejudice's bark is worse than its bite. In other matters, such as housing discrimination or where subtle social ostracism is involved, the *fait accompli* technique does not work so well, because prejudice in these instances is deeper rooted and more stubborn. The advice of our authors, however, is to press as far as possible with legislative and administrative action, and trust to education and the slow spontaneous transformation of our society to do the rest.

BUT to return to the theory itself. The six points under which I have tried to summarize it will, I hope, give the reader some notion of its grand sweep. Modern American social science has produced few comparable collections of hypotheses that illuminate a complex phenomenon from so many sides and penetrate so deeply into its structure. Not that these hypotheses will not have to be revised in many instances: some of the salient points of the theory seem to me to rest on rather weak foundations. Above all, as I shall presently attempt to show, the methodology which this theory employs—a rather peculiar variant of positivism, with its exclusive reliance on the controlled observation of fact—obscures certain very important problems and thus makes the development of a really comprehensive theory of prejudice impossible.

But the authors' positivist orientation is a source of strength as well as weakness; we owe to it the wealth of expert observation offered

in these volumes. Thus, thanks to Professor Allport, we now possess a well-substantiated account of how prejudice is learned in our culture; this disposes of some stubborn popular myths about the "instinctive" foundations of racial aversion. (Unfortunately, we are given nothing about the *unlearning* of prejudice; it would be useful to study subjects who have undergone a conversion from prejudiced to unprejudiced thinking.) The Bettelheim-Janowitz hypothesis about prejudice and vertical mobility (see Allport pp. 223f.) shows us how economic insecurity and status deterioration lead to intensified prejudice. Allport's chapter on "traits due to victimization" and Saenger's on "the cost of prejudice," to mention only two, are also outstanding pieces.

Serious problems, however, arise when we turn to the more general assumptions and methodological principles on which the theory as a whole is based.

WHAT we notice first is the strong value orientation that runs through it: the problems pose themselves in stark black-and-white contrasts. Error is pitted against truth, mental instability and illness against health and adaptation, tyranny and exploitation against democracy and humanitarianism. Now prejudice and discrimination do involve many of these evils—error, mental instability, and exploitation—and no scientific study, however dispassionate, can fail to notice this. Yet there is something strange about the way in which the value aspect of the problem of prejudice figures so prominently in a study by supposedly hard-headed, merely factual social scientists.

True, Professor Allport disclaims any concern with good and bad. Prejudice, he says, is a fact, and need not involve a value judgment at all. By such an assertion, he wishes to indicate that he feels free to characterize certain behavior patterns as "prejudiced" even though they are not disapproved of by the societies in which they are current. This would not necessarily mean, of course, that the term "prejudice" has no value connotation for him, Allport, personally. But he assures us that he is not using "prejudice" as a value term in this personal sense either. As a citizen, Professor Allport says, the scientist may be opposed to prejudice, but as a scientist he merely observes and explains facts. If he were in favor of prejudice, his findings would still be the same.

It is only natural that a scientist should give

such an account of his procedure. Yet one cannot help feeling that in this instance the scientist's account of his work is not realistic. It is just too improbable for a completely unbiased examination of prejudice to show it as always being associated with distortion of reality, mental instability, and contempt for people, and lack of prejudice with the contrary. Human character and society are not that orderly. When a scientific theory indicates that variations in certain observed tendencies are in marked correlation with variations in a *large number* of independently defined values, we can be sure that a great deal of *a priori* manipulation has crept into the construction of the theory. This manipulation may be the result of the definitions used, or of an insufficient analysis of guiding postulates; at any rate, it detracts from the theory's validity.

Thus, Allport defines ethnic prejudice as a "faulty," unwarranted generalization. Is it any wonder, then, that he finds a perfect correspondence between "prejudiced" thinking and thinking that is not factually correct?

As it happens, factual correctness is one of the few values that have survived the wholesale positivist critique of value-concepts. Social scientists who are reluctant to criticize something on ethical grounds are perfectly willing to reject it for being "incorrect." A theory that by definition establishes a harmony between violations of this positivist canon of correctness and certain types of behavior which the modern social scientist would like to reject on other, moral, grounds but dares not—such a theory is intensely reassuring to him. The only trouble is, this harmony exists in definition, not in reality. Adopt a different definition of prejudice and the illusion of harmony vanishes.

I shall return to this point later. Right now I should like to discuss some other correspondences our authors postulate between prejudice and deviation from value-norms—correspondences that derive, it seems to me, from *a priori* manipulation.

CONSIDER, for example, the correspondence between prejudiced attitudes and lack of mental health and balance (another value-concept that has managed to escape the positivist massacre of absolutes). In much of what they say here, our authors are on firm ground. To begin with, they do not postulate a sweeping correlation between prejudice and pathology. Very strong prejudice, they believe, far

surpassing in intensity the prejudices generally found in the population, is pathological. Although this statement depends on the definition of "pathological," this is both inevitable and innocuous; it is a psychiatric commonplace that a chronic level of aggressiveness far above the group norm is a sign of pathological disturbance. But our theory does not stop here. It has much to say about prejudiced attitudes of less than pathological intensity, running along a scale from very high to very low. About attitude-scales of this sort our scientists entertain ideas which have no warrant in contemporary psychiatric knowledge. While granting that people near the midpoint of the scale are not to be considered disturbed, they still expect to find the ideally healthy, well-adjusted individuals clustered at the bottom of the prejudice scale. Unfortunately, however, no such correlation can be substantiated by clinical observation.

The illusion that only unprejudiced people are well balanced and well adjusted finds support in certain observations to the effect that in our culture the least prejudiced people are also the least dogmatic in their convictions, the most flexible and skeptical, the most given to testing and modifying their attitudes. Since our scientists believe that an absence of firm conviction and commitment is the first requisite of good adaptation to reality, it is no wonder that the correlation between ideal health and lack of prejudice seems to them to be proved by these observations. To me, however, the proof does not seem impressive. Extreme flexibility may be just as pathological and inadapative as extreme rigidity; we need firm convictions for healthy living, as well as flexibility. The sooner our students of prejudice recognize this, the better; *for we cannot really combat prejudice without firm convictions*. The lovable, ineffectual, namby-pamby "democratic personality" canonized by our authors will, I am afraid, not be of much help in the fight against prejudice; there is only some consolation in the fact that he exists more in the pages of scientific works than in reality.

The close correlation that our authors postulate between "prejudice" and "hostility to democracy" also seems to me to be a product of *a priori* manipulation. We can, of course, define democracy as a political belief system that excludes ethnic prejudice. If so, prejudice is something undemocratic by definition. But we can hardly discuss democracy in a realistic

fashion if we see in it nothing but a lofty belief system and ignore the actual people making up democratic society. It is an unfortunate fact that the people in some societies harbor strong ethnic prejudices; such societies, *just when they are democratic*, will practice discrimination. In the United States, for example, the struggle against prejudice and discrimination is, in actuality, to a large extent the affair of idealistic elites rather than of the democratic masses.

IN THE "strategic" chapter of his book, Professor Saenger makes no bones about this. He cheerfully recommends that management employ high-handed, authoritarian methods to abolish discrimination in plants before the rank and file can rally to defend it. Yet in his theoretical chapters, the foe of prejudice is the "democratic" personality, and management is the profiteer of discrimination.

The modern social scientist as a scientist cannot condemn certain "bad" things on moral grounds, but he can stigmatize them as "undemocratic." Prejudice, then, is presented as an anti-democratic thing. "Labor force" and "rank and file" are "democratic" symbols, "management" an "anti-democratic" one. Management is thus (theoretically) on the side of discrimination, even if in our workaday world we expect to find it on the other side.

And so Professor Saenger writes: "Discriminatory practices appear to be of definite advantage for the representatives of management in a competitive economic system." A competent and careful scholar, he does not, of course, mean to uphold the absurdity that job discrimination in industry is primarily fostered by management as against labor, or represents a source of direct economic gain to it. As he notes, such discrimination more often procures economic advantages for the organized workers who restrict competition by excluding Negroes from their unions. What he has in mind is a far more subtle thing: when management institutes or exploits discriminatory practices in industry—for example, by hiring Negro strike-breakers, or by adopting differential pay rates favoring white workers—the bitterness thus engendered in both racial groups lessens labor solidarity in general. This is the indirect gain that management derives from segregation.

This theory strikes me as most far-fetched. It is quite true that management often combats certain manifestations of labor solidarity; this is why it long resisted unionization. But when

the unions themselves lessen "labor solidarity" by excluding Negroes, it is difficult to believe that management considers this a blow struck in the cause of capital. When discrimination in craft unions reduces the number of people possessing certain skills (by discouraging Negroes from acquiring them), the result may well be that the skill in question will command a higher wage than it would without discrimination. In such cases, the lack of labor solidarity will definitely not benefit the employer.

It would also seem to me that when an employer himself refuses to hire Negroes, he is usually very far from entertaining the deep Machiavellian design of diminishing working-class solidarity and thus promoting the interests of capital. It is more realistic to assume that the man is simply indulging his own or his customers' prejudices.

CONNECTED with this belief in the anti-democratic nature of prejudice is the author's view that race prejudice in the United States is in part a substitute for class prejudice. Race prejudice serves a function that in ethnically more homogeneous European societies is served by class distinctions. One of the reasons for greater class equality in the United States is that large ethnic minorities are available as targets for discrimination; the exploiting groups attain their ends by victimizing ethnic minorities rather than the lower classes.

What this theory implies is that class stratification in the United States would be more marked, closer to the European type, if our society were ethnically more homogeneous, or if it practiced less ethnic and racial discrimination. It is undeniable that informal social or unavoidable "natural" handicaps—for example, the new immigrant's lack of command of the language—hinder ascent up the socio-economic ladder. Without such handicaps, many more people would have clamored for entry into the rapidly expanding upper classes and those already "in" would have been squeezed harder. This being so, would not the latter have tried to protect themselves by curbing the upward mobility of all lower-class people and thus bringing about a more "European" class structure? I don't, however, think it probable that things would have taken such a course except for ethnic discrimination. Both the past record and certain current social trends argue against Professor Saenger's thesis.

First of all, our egalitarian social pattern was established very early, in regions where neither ethnic nor racial discrimination played a significant role. Later, social stresses resulting from industrialization might have produced sharp class cleavages; but the reason they did not do so is hardly to be found in ethnic discrimination. The decisive factor at first was the frontier: free land was available for settlement to any man who wished to get out from under. In more recent times, after the closing of the frontier, the sharp increase in agricultural and industrial productivity has been the main factor mitigating class antagonisms. All this suggests that the class structure of our society would not be significantly different even if in the past it had been ethnically homogeneous or non-discriminatory.

What we are observing today seems to me to clinch the argument. Our society is steadily growing more homogeneous—and yet discrimination is on the decline. If Professor Saenger's theory were correct, class differences should be sharpening. But class egalitarianism is growing *pari passu* with the obliteration of ethnic heterogeneity and the decline of discrimination. This is a very strong indication that ethnic prejudice is not, on the whole, a "substitute" for class discrimination.

There are also strong theoretical reasons for doubting that it could be such a substitute. Ethnic discrimination, as a sociological phenomenon, is essentially different from class conflict, and in a democracy works, on the whole, *within the same class or between comparable socio-economic groups*. Discrimination, after all, aims at reducing the competition for some scarce value and monopolizing it for one group. White bankers don't have to worry about the competition of Negro porters; white porters do. But *prejudice* is a very different thing: it is free-floating and works across as well as within class lines. Here too any fond expectation of finding a harmony between prejudice and anti-democracy is disappointed, for though prejudice is directed against members of another class, the hated are by no means always lower in their class position than the haters. This is a very conspicuous feature in anti-Semitism. There is anti-Semitism from "below" as well as anti-Semitism from "above"—the latter found among the snobs of country clubs, the former in the following of rabble-rousers. These two are, sociologically speaking, very different phenomena; so far as their practical and his-

torical effect is concerned, there can be hardly any doubt that anti-Semitism from "below" is far more extreme and dangerous than anti-Semitism from "above."

Prejudice and discrimination, to be sure, are regularly associated with feelings of superiority. Such superiority feelings, however, have no necessary socio-economic basis; they seem to have no foundation in sociological fact. Are they, then, purely imaginary delusions?

Any such easy assumption would seem to me to be mistaken. There is cultural authority behind the feeling of superiority accompanying prejudice—or, in other words, prejudice exploits a real vulnerability in its target. The vulnerability of certain groups to prejudice and discrimination is real and not imagined; it is a feature of their actual position within society, or rather of their ambiguous position within and yet without it. The vulnerable people are marginal people. It is easy, as in the case of the Jews, to see that this marginality is not the same thing as low socio-economic status. But it is difficult to see just what it is.

THIS is the heart of the problem of prejudice and discrimination as a cultural fact. What is this mysterious vulnerability? What makes certain groups marginal within a society? Successful as our author's theory is in shedding light on many aspects of prejudice, it cannot answer these questions. Neither frustrations encountered in the rough-and-tumble of competitive economy, nor psychic damage suffered in childhood, nor the organized defense of vested interests, can explain why certain ethnic groups are singled out as targets of prejudice and discrimination. The prevalence of stereotyped beliefs about them also cannot be regarded as the cause of their vulnerability. The psychological findings about prejudiced thinking and behavior that Professors Allport and Saenger have collected can explain variations in the intensity of prejudice, but not why certain groups were singled out as targets in the first place and keep being singled out.

Only one of the explanations offered by our authors—that of the cultural "stereotype"—is somehow related to this authoritative cultural choice. But the prevalence of hostile "stereotypes" could explain the vulnerability of certain minorities to prejudice and discrimination only if it were true that hostile and prejudicial attitudes and actions always spring from beliefs asserting the blameworthiness of the victims.

This is, in fact, what Allport assumes; but is the assumption justified?

According to Allport, hostility towards a group always expresses some generalized blame directed at its members. The question then is whether this blame is justified (or, as the writer says, "well earned"), or gratuitous. In some cases, Allport says, valid reasons for hostility exist: the target group may actually "plot aggression," or its members' conduct may in fact be morally inferior or obnoxious. If so, the resulting conflict is "realistic" and no "prejudice" is involved. In ethnic prejudice, however, the blame which the hostility expresses is always gratuitous: even if the stereotypes do contain a grain of truth, they necessarily distort reality because they ignore such individual variations as always exist within an ethnic group. Ethnic conflict is never "realistic."

This distinction between "prejudiced" and "realistic" behavior represents, I believe, a great improvement over previous analyses of prejudice which tended to lump together all unfavorable attitudes towards "out-groups," no matter how "well earned," as manifestations of prejudice. Yet the distinction seems to me unsatisfactory.

First, it implies that in every conflict right must be pitted against wrong. If the attacker blames the defender justly, he is right ("realistic"); if unjustly, he is wrong ("unrealistic"). But can we always determine the rights and wrongs in the accusations and counter-accusations traded in group conflict? Can we, in fact, classify types of conflict scientifically if we use such loaded concepts? I doubt it.

But this is not all. The concept of "realistic" versus "prejudiced" hostility is not only difficult to apply, it is also irrelevant to an extremely important category of hostile behavior in which blame, whether gratuitous or well earned, plays no important role. I have in mind the phenomenon of social "ranking" in pre-democratic (archaic, feudal, or "folk") societies.

"Ranking" is essentially an institutional (socio-historical) phenomenon, not a psychological one. In the societies in question, each individual has a well-defined rank depending on the class or group, the "kind" of people, he belongs to. These rankings are an intrinsic feature of the social structure of these societies; they are not based upon stereotyped generalizations about the good or bad qualities, the supposed merits and demerits, of the people ranked. *It is indeed the other way around: people are*

deemed good or bad, superior or inferior, according to the rank they occupy in the institutional order. These judgments reflect correctly perceived social facts; they involve no faulty (factually unwarranted) generalizations. The archaic ethos knew no distinction between "good" and "bad" people apart from their position in the social hierarchy. The "good" people ("gentlefolk") are *defined* as those who are rich and secure; the "bad" ("villeins" and "churls") as those who are poor and down-trodden. We may recoil from the callousness of this ethos (of which more survives in our society than many of us think), but we cannot impute to it any failure to see facts as facts. If anything, treating people according to their rank presupposes only too true a perception of their social strength or vulnerability. Thus the stigmatization of people of low rank is not irrational behavior, requiring a psychological explanation, but springs from a rational perception of social facts affording an opportunity to exploit or degrade, as they exist.

BUT what, our scientists may ask, has all this to do with prejudice and discrimination in a modern democratic society, where "opportunity" ranking is absent from the institutional order? In a democracy, it will be conceded, there are differences in influence, status, and income, but the institutional order ignores these things. One might therefore assume that the phenomenon of "ranking," which belongs to an extinct institutional system insofar as the West is concerned, is irrelevant to any analysis of contemporary Western societies.

This assumption is false. When institutions are discarded in the course of history, some of their features may still survive as social and psychological realities. Ethnic prejudice in our society may be traced back, I think, to patterns of institutional ranking prevailing in the pre-democratic Western societies from which we are descended. To put it another way, certain groups are vulnerable to prejudice and discrimination in our society because they are the descendants of groups that had occupied a markedly inferior position in the pre-democratic social order of the past. It would seem that this quality of being recognizable as of "inferior" descent is a necessary condition for the survival of "ranking" in its changed guise of "prejudice." This is why prejudice is directed at certain constant ethnic or racial targets.

The essential cause of vulnerability to preju-

dice, then, is perceived descent from a stock of hierarchically low rank. Aversion to people of "alien" stock has nothing to do with it; descendants of high-prestige alien groups are not vulnerable. Hostile generalizations and stereotypes play an important role in prejudiced behavior, as do economic motives, but these are consequences rather than causes of vulnerability to prejudice. Both the stereotypes and generalizations about target groups, as well as these groups' actual position in the economic structure of the society, undergo continual change; yet they continue to be targets of prejudice. We cannot explain this "target constancy" by reference to popular belief or material self-interest.

I think that vulnerability to prejudice (as distinct from variations in the intensity and the manifestations of prejudice) cannot be explained without some such historically oriented hypothesis as I have sketched. Let me try to indicate briefly how this hypothesis may account for "target constancy" in the case of the two most conspicuous and "perennial" targets of ethnic prejudice, Jews and Negroes.

In pre-democratic Western society, one belonged to society only as a member of a cult. We may call such societies "sacral," as against the "profane" societies of the modern age, in which civic status and cult membership are entirely independent of each other. Now it is conceivable for a "sacral" society to be organized on a pluralistic basis, admitting the members of different cults to full civic status on an equal footing. In the West, however, such pluralism rarely existed. More often, one cult was recognized as official—it alone could confer full citizenship upon its adherents. In pre-democratic Europe, membership in the officially recognized Christian cult as a rule was a necessary condition for an individual's acceptance as a full member of the society. Jews and Moslems could live in such societies and even enjoy certain rights and privileges, but their position was exceptional and marginal—reflected, in most cases, in the low "rank" they were accorded.

Western society eventually abandoned both its "sacral" character and its hierarchical social structure and admitted Jews and other dissenters to full citizenship. Within Western society, however, the memory of the earlier situation persists. Not all social groups abandoned the "sacral" outlook at once; those which did not were potentially or actually anti-Semitic on re-

ligious grounds. But anti-Semitism in the modern Western world is not exclusively, or perhaps even predominantly, a matter of religious antagonism. Groups and individuals completely secularized in their outlook can nevertheless become violently anti-Semitic. Although they no longer live in the spiritual climate of the old sacral society, they still remember that under its institutions the Jews had been inferior to them. Here, then, is an opportunity to assert one's superiority over a socially defined category of people. Although the institutions of society no longer allow for "ranking," it might still be practiced as it were informally and unofficially.

For these patterns of aggression, ideological justifications were needed, varying according to the circumstances and the intellectual fashions of the day. At times, concrete social offenses allegedly committed by the Jews were stressed: usury and swindling and exploitation of the poor. At other times, the charges concerned their supposed national unreliability and sinister *political* ambitions (the "world conspiracy" motif); inability to assimilate Western culture; excessive addiction to intellectual pursuits; and so on. More recently, the racial idea (the radically alien "blood" of the Jews) gained prominence. In all this, however, the sociologically decisive factor was the "opportunity" for aggression, provided by behavior and thought habits *inherited from the past*.

The same is true, I think, of anti-Negro prejudice and discrimination. The Negroes entered American society as slaves: their rank in the social structure was well defined and as low as it could be. When slavery was abolished, *ad hoc* discrimination and snubbing patterns replaced the old institutional ranking: recognition of equality would have meant, for many people, a lowering of their self-esteem.

Does this mean that ethnic prejudice must always be with us, since we cannot change our past? Not at all. The social memory of an earlier institutional ranking tends to be effaced by time. We cannot expect the "post-institutional" vulnerability of minorities to disappear quickly in Western society, but that vulnerability may become less under the impact of time and new cultural and social developments.

I think that the exploration of these historical and institutional factors is extremely important in the study of prejudices. It is clear, however, that a research technique devoted solely to the controlled observation of behavioral phenomena cannot do justice to them.

The neglect of the historical and institutional aspect of the problem is easily explained by the positivist methodological bias of our scholars. Yet, strangely enough, they neglect it only in constructing their theory; in the practical and "strategic" parts of both books, the institutional approach is dominant. Suddenly, such authoritative social mechanisms as law and administrative regulation emerge as decisive in the control of prejudice. This practical approach seems to me quite sound; but in the works before us, it is almost entirely divorced from the theoretical analysis.

POSITIVIST thinking plays strange tricks on its devotees. It starts out by proclaiming its utter distrust of all "preferences," preaching the virtue of singleminded devotion to factual observation, but ends up by taking its own preferences as established facts. Its wishful syllogisms go something like this: controlled observation is an eminently safe method; it would therefore be nice if we could find out everything about human behavior by controlled observation; hence it is a fact that everything about human behavior can be discovered by administering psychological tests to undergraduates. Or: ethical preferences are of doubtful validity; it would therefore be nice if we could reject all bad things on purely intellectual, psychiatric, or political grounds; hence it is a fact that anything unquestionably bad is bad in terms of these criteria.

The inadequacies of a positivistically oriented study of prejudice in our culture are not those that one would expect on the basis of the popular "stereotype" of the hard-headed, purely fact-oriented, morally neutral scientist. It is just the other way around; we have to criticize the social scientist for not being hard-headed enough, for letting his preferences lead him by the nose. And these preferences are at bottom moral. It is clear, I think, from the preceding analysis that our positivist scholars do not deny ethical absolutes; they merely despair of finding intellectually safe grounds on which to assert them. This is why they smuggle them in behind intellectual, psychiatric, and political screens. But it is not so much ethics that suffers from this (as has often been charged) as science. This is highly ironical, but also comforting. While we criticize our scientists on scientific grounds, we can take inspiration from their pure dedication to the cause of man, to the infinite worth of the human creature.